



U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary

F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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News Advisory

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Contact: Jeff Lungren/Terry Shawn
202-225-2492

House Approves Legislation Curbing Obesity-Related Lawsuit Abuse

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House today by a 306-to-120 margin approved bipartisan legislation aimed at curbing frivolous lawsuits targeting the food industry for the obesity problems of its patrons. H.R. 554, the “Personal Responsibility in Food Consumption Act,” was introduced by Rep. Ric Keller (R-Fla.) and now goes to the Senate for consideration.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-Wis.) commented, “Frivolous lawsuits against the food industry present the latest effort undermining personal responsibility. An overwhelming majority of Americans oppose these abusive lawsuits and are disgusted by these frivolous claims. These suits would be laughable if they were not so harmful. In addition to threatening the food industry and its 12 million employees, these noxious lawsuits raise the food costs to American consumers.”

“I’m pleased that the U.S. House has agreed that we should be practicing common sense in the food court and not blaming others in a legal court,” stated Rep. Keller. “We need to get back to the principles of personal responsibility and away from this culture where everybody plays the victim.”

H.R. 554 would generally prohibit frivolous obesity or weight gain-related claims against the food industry. It would, however, allow obesity-related claims to go forward in several circumstances, including cases in which a State or Federal law was broken and as a result a person suffered harm. Under H.R. 554, cases could also go forward in which a company violates an express contract or warranty. Also, because H.R. 554 applies only to claims based on “weight gain” or “obesity,” lawsuits could still proceed if, for example, someone gets sick from consuming tainted food.

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